

Bled
Strategic
Forum
2018

10 – 11 September 2018
Bled, Slovenia
www.bledstrategicforum.org

Recent technological advances have helped deepen our understanding of the world and, in certain areas, bring us closer together than ever, but the world remains rife with tensions. The predictions and indeed hope of many political thinkers at the end of the 20th century that access to information would result in greater homogeneity has not materialised. While many believe that facts are objective, we are now learning that in human interactions, distinguishing between facts and perceptions is harder than it seems, that reality is very personal, depending on our cultural experience, traditions and values. How do we distinguish a fact from a perception or a myth? How do we decide that what we see is true and not merely the result of subjective views? And when our realities differ, how do we bridge the divide?

We have developed the instruments needed to engage in effective, inclusive and transparent dialogue. The array of tools at our disposal has never before been seen in history, but these new technologies are merely tools, and they are also being used to perpetuate our differences.

We continue to remain enveloped in our traditional perceptions and are better at judging each other than looking inwards and making improvements at home. When will we start searching with the same eagerness for things we have in common, and which would ensure a prosperous and sustainable future for everyone?

First, we need to look inward in order to move forward. We need to start making changes at home and engaging in a meaningful discussion about how we govern our societies and how we bring up and educate the next generation. We need to instil the next generation with greater emotional intelligence; only then will we make fundamental progress towards bridging the divide.

Furthermore, a comprehensive public discourse in society has become almost non-existent. The fundamental changes require time, they are generational in nature, and the time to start making them is now.

Leaders' Panel

To be announced.

Special Panel

To be announced.

State of the World

To be confirmed.



Night Owl Session – More Seats at the Table: Achieving Gender Equality Today

In partnership with Global Diplomacy Lab. Hosted by Boston Consulting Group.

Almost everyone is talking about gender equality these days. The #MeToo movement, this year's G7 discussions and SDG5 brought into focus the need for gender equality. Women are taking the helm in countries like Iceland and New Zealand, but women everywhere still face significant structural inequality. Epidemic levels of gender violence, challenges of access to education, health and reproductive rights, and political representation are indicators that women are still falling behind.

So, what's missing from the global efforts to achieve gender equality? What can be done to make this an issue for everyone? How do we deal with the competing backlash/threat to masculinity? If calls for gender parity are denounced, what other measures should be taken to attain a better gender balance in decision-making, corporations, politics, military, etc.?

This session will explore how unusual players can take up the challenge of gender equality, the risks and challenges to the feminist movement, and how we lead cultural and social change.

European Union: What Keeps Us United

In recent years, the EU has been facing significant challenges, which have lifted the veil of its unity, revealing its internal fragmentation. Sometimes, the Union seems to be criss-crossed with divisive lines running from West to East, from the centre to the periphery, and from North to South, making it seem like a variable-geometry Union. However, despite the reality of sometimes diverging interests which arise from different historical, demographic, geopolitical and economic backgrounds, interdependence remains a key underpinning element of the EU's daily reality. The key principle of managing our mutual dependence has been, or should be, solidarity, as proven from the outset of the integration process.

In the light of shared and recently unprecedented challenges, European leaders have reconfirmed the need for unity between Member States; however, the approaches to finding solutions appear to differ. The EU panel will seek to discover what unites us, how we are bridging the existing gaps and divisions within the EU, and how we will ensure that we maintain our unity.

Transforming World Development – Beyond the State-Centric Approach

By adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, world leaders pledged their commitment to a new approach to global development. This new approach is based on the realisation that states are no longer the only drivers of development, and that other partners have to assume greater responsibility for sustainable development, including financial institutions, the private sector, civil society and local communities. Only by engaging all partners will the 2030 Agenda produce transformative effects.

In light of the new development paradigm, the panel will discuss ways of changing the current mind-set to challenge the status quo and to better exploit the potential of all stakeholders, including through the empowerment of women. It will also look at the potential of innovations and technologies to overcome the global challenges defined by the 2030 Agenda.

It will also address the question of how to mobilise various developmental drivers in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda goals – that is, to end hunger, reduce inequality and ensure environment-friendly development – and in so doing, leave no one behind.

Digital Bridge: Transformation for Institutional Resilience

In partnership with Centre for European Perspective and U.S. Department of State.

Digitalisation is a modern imperative. Institutions find themselves in a fast-paced and evolving environment in which rapid changes in communications media and power dynamics have significant effect on the role and voice of governments, business, media, and civil society organisations. In order to remain resilient and pliant while further serving the best interests of society, institutions must embrace on the digital future and transform and transcend traditional ways of operating. They must form the bridge.

Global digitalisation was envisioned as a means of bringing us closer together, but discussions now focus on how it pushes us apart. Is digitalisation responsible for deepening social cleavages, or is it simply exposing us to rifts that existed already? The filter bubble phenomena, often cited as a result of digital communication platforms, existed long before the digital communication revolution, but has the volume and social element of modern media exacerbated this problem? How has empowering individuals to be their own editors and arbiters of truth hindered the ability of everyone to validate the accuracy of the information to which they are exposed?

Mediation in a New Multipolar World – Between Expectations and Reality

The world today is increasingly exposed not only to more threats, but also to new ones – conflicts are becoming more asymmetrical and interconnected, with a number of new actors involved; after decades, we are again facing the peril of the use of nuclear weapons; the number of terrorist attacks around the globe remains high; cyber space is becoming a new theatre of war; climate change is the most important threat multiplier. How should we effectively address all these complex contemporary challenges to international peace and security, which are not limited to state, ethnic or religious borders? The world may never have had so many tools for conflict prevention and early warning mechanisms; but are we also using them to the benefit of the people who are most affected (people on the ground), whose expectations are very often overlooked/ignored, or just for the advantage of main actors/players involved?

Cyber Security System: Achieving Resilience

In partnership with Siemens.

The growing threat of advanced cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure and industrial systems presents a unique challenge for businesses and countries alike. Increasingly, governments are being called on to respond to cyber-attacks and provide a secure cyber environment, despite the fact that the infrastructure of cyber security has so far been in the hands of the IT sector and not under state control. Cyber security has become one of the pillars of national security, and partial solutions by individual organisations are no longer sufficient to counter cyber threats. It is imperative for countries to build a system that ensures cyber security.

How do we build such a system and what elements does it need to include in order to effectively address these threats? Will the information revolution work to further integrate and connect Europe through a single digital market? How is the private sector dealing with the challenges of cyber-attacks, and what new business opportunities does the cyber insecurity offer for companies?



International Criminal Court: 20 Years after Rome – Setting a Path for the Future

This year will mark the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the first permanent international criminal court for prosecuting individuals for atrocity crimes. Over the years, the Court has become a meaningful actor and achieved notable results, including with its judicial pronouncements on sexual and gender-based crimes, child soldiers and cultural heritage. However, the Court also faces several challenges. With Burundi's withdrawal from the ICC, the goal of universality calls for greater attention. The Court's effectiveness continues to depend on cooperation with states and international organisations, particularly the United Nations, and on adequate funding. As it becomes increasingly active, the Court could come under greater pressure. The 20th anniversary is an important opportunity to celebrate the Court's many accomplishments and an encouragement to undertake a strategic assessment of the challenges with a view to securing its successful future.

Being Human in the Age of Technology

In partnership with IBM.

At times our society feels like a runaway train. Technologies in artificial intelligence, biotech, nanotech, to name only a few fields, are developing at an extreme pace, but are not accompanied by a strategic analysis of their impact not only on our daily lives but the whole of humanity – on social relations, on our emotional and biological selves, as well as on our legal systems and regulatory frameworks. The infrastructure for such fundamental changes is not in place.

The panel will explore cutting edge technological advances and how they will affect our lives and the human race as a whole. What changes can we foresee in the coming decades? How can we ensure that they will lead us to a better existence and that we use technology to improve our lives and not to perpetuate the cycles of global violence and wars that mark human history?

Bridging the Trust Divide between People and Institutions

In partnership with Global Diplomacy Lab.

Levels of trust in institutions vary across time and cultures. The 2018 Edelman TRUST BAROMETER, measuring trust across a number of institutions, sectors and geographies, reveals a world of seemingly stagnant distrust in business, government, NGOs and the media. However, trust in institutions is one of the most critical elements of healthy societies, as it matters for their legitimacy, well-being and, ultimately, stability. This is particularly relevant in periods of economic, political and social instability, when credible institutions are actually mandated to absorb shock waves. This participatory panel will seek to discuss the root causes of people's declining trust in well-established and alternative institutions and share experiences of how this challenge is addressed in various regions and at different levels. It will also explore alternative ways of regaining trust and enhancing public engagement with institutions to bridge the gap between people and institutions.

Western Balkans: Lost Years or New Hope?

The EU enlargement process has always been a political process. Despite the technical benchmarks, monitoring missions, evaluations and progress reports, it took only one sentence from the President of the European Commission five years ago to raise doubt and fear about belief in the enlargement policy and the Western Balkans. After several years of uncertainty, it again took only one sentence from the same President to revive hope and enthusiasm in the region, which in the past was much more concerned about having a positive external appearance than internal reforms. This hope was translated into concrete language with a new strategy on enlargement; new tasks have been divided among the countries of the region, and uncertainty has been replaced by actual dates for enlargement.

But why will things be different this time? How will the lost years of slow progress be replaced by the swift and successful transformation of a society ready to embrace the norms, standards and values of the EU? Are the political elites ready to embark on this road, which in the end might cost them their privileges and functions? Is civil society ready to act as a watchdog and catalyst for changes?

Climate Change and Security Dynamics

Scholars and security agencies around the world view the issue of climate change from two angles: climate change as a threat, and climate change as a threat multiplier. According to IPCC, the increased magnitude of climate change disasters in coming years will alter countries' environmental, social, and economic fabric. The resulting degradation of natural resources, reduced opportunities for livelihood and mass displacement and migration will increase competition for resources, and could lead to conflicts, unrest and even wars. However, amicable strategies/policies can prevent the resulting conflicts and mass migration. All of the above and many more dimensions of climate change as a threat multiplier require concerted efforts at the policy level, and discussions among important stakeholders. The session with leading experts and policy makers from around the world will discuss the various dimensions of security threats emerging from climate change effects and possible policy options to prevent climate change from becoming a threat multiplier.

SIDE-EVENTS

Diaspora' Role of a Bridge in Contemporary International Relations

In partnership with Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Slovenians Abroad.

With modern societies becoming more and more mobile, countries are increasingly realising the importance of their respective diasporas for their transnational relations and development. With policies towards the new diasporas, traditional diasporas are gaining more attention. But there are big differences between countries regarding how much focus they put into these issues. Slovenia has traditionally considered the Slovenian diaspora as an important factor in its national development. A big effort is made today to develop constructive relations with new emigrants as well. Innovative approaches to maintaining the Slovene language, culture and national consciousness through connecting Slovenian scientists and students from around the world (ASEF, VTIS), interregional business conferences, supporting start-ups etc. are well-received and are examples of good practice. The aim of the round table is to compare and analyse approaches to the diasporas of countries that are best known in this field. Concepts of trans-border cooperation, brain circulation, global networking, building economic ties and returning migration will be presented.

The Role of South East European National Security Authorities in Ensuring Cyber Security

In partnership with Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Protection of Classified Information.

Created in 2011 at the initiative of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat and with the support of the NATO Office of Security (NOS) and the EU Council General Secretariat Security Office, the South East European National Security Authorities (SEENSA) is a forum of heads of national security authorities (NSAs) from RCC members for discussing the development of common measures to protect classified information in the region.

These authorities are striving to facilitate an exchange of views and ideas on regional security cooperation and to help enhance regional security, stability and the building of trust. In addition to efforts towards unified security practices and procedures for exchanging classified and other information with limited distribution, where appropriate, the SEENSA also provides a forum for discussing ways to adapt security practices to the constant changes in the overall security environment of South East Europe.

De-Victimising Victims

In partnership with ITF Enhancing Human Security.

Victim assistance is one of the main 5 pillars of humanitarian mine action. Without support provided to those affected by landmines and other explosive remnants of war, the civil population can remain incapacitated by the consequences of armed conflict for decades. Victim assistance is merely a matter of medical rehabilitation, but instead requires a comprehensive approach, including psychosocial support and socioeconomic assistance. It has to incorporate a long-term perspective; the involvement of mine victims and their situation has to be included in public policies and frameworks, especially relating to issues of health, disabilities, employment, and education. Mine victims remain after a country is declared mine free, but supporting them requires capacities, expertise and, above all, funding.

The panel will discuss the possibilities of overcoming the divides between mine victims and the donor community, bridging the gap between victim assistance and other fields of humanitarian mine action, and solutions for empowering mine victims.

Engagement, Conditionality or Both? Security and the Rule-Of-Law through a Renewed EU Perspective

In partnership with IISG – Integrative Internal Security Governance.

Intensive efforts continue in the Western Balkans to meet the EU's accession preconditions concerning security. The EU perspective remains a key driver of transformation, but the lessons learned from the efforts of the last decade and a half invested by countries and the international community are no less important. A unique and complex system of security cooperation involves capacity-building, transferring good practice and cross-border cooperation, inspired by both vertical conditionality and the need for horizontal cooperation. We should rethink the venues of security reform by applying comprehensive concepts in the period of the renewed EU perspective, including those of "Integrative Internal Security Governance". What concepts have the potential to advance the engagement and achieve a sustained track record in tackling the challenges of serious and organised crime, violent extremism, terrorism and border security? How should the EU proceed to ensure efficient external policy governance?

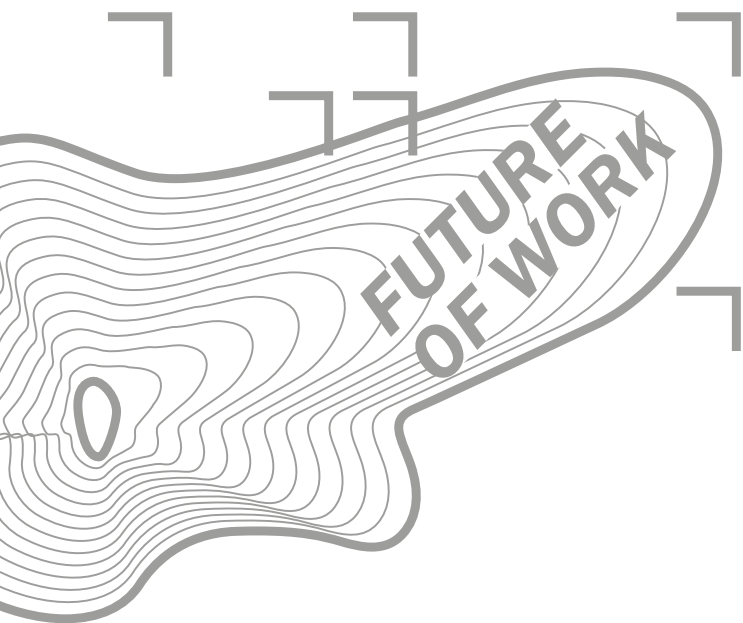
Survivors: Breaking the Silence on Child Sexual Abuse

Book reading with Eirliani Abdul Rahman.

Eirliani A. Rahman is Program Director at the Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation. After resigning from the Singapore Foreign Service, she set up her own non-profit YAKIN (Youth, Adult Survivors & Kin In Need), which is aimed at helping child victims and adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

The book 'Survivors', published by Marshall Cavendish Asia in November 2017, chronicles the true stories of 12 brave survivors of child sexual abuse: 5 men and 7 women from Germany, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Singapore, South Africa, the UK and the US.

The session will include a survivor from South Africa reading excerpts from his chapter in the book. We will be talking about the psychological impact of abuse both in the short- and long-term; how to protect your children and wards from danger; signs to look out for in an abused child; and how to be supportive to a survivor regarding the trauma.



Organised in cooperation with the American Chamber of Commerce in Slovenia, the business forum will focus on the evolution of work and its impact on jobs, businesses and society at large.

Globalisation, technological progress and demographic change are having a profound impact on work. While the future offers unparalleled opportunities, it also presents significant challenges. How will these changes affect workers, employers and society? The future of work is already here. And we will all have to deal with it.

AmCham Business Leaders Club Breakfast

In partnership with AmCham Slovenia.

We are in an economic cycle in which jobs as we know them are rapidly changing. The World Economic Forum's "Future of Jobs" study predicts that 5 million jobs will be lost before 2020 as artificial intelligence, robotics, nanotechnology and other socio-economic factors replace the need for human workers. The good news is that those same technological advances will also create 2.1 million new jobs. But the manual and clerical workers who find themselves out of work are unlikely to have the skills required to compete for the new roles. According to the latest research, we will soon be only as good as the skills we possess, and for this reason we will have to refocus skills education.

What will automation, machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) mean for tomorrow's workforce and what effect will they have on jobs, skills, and wages? What are the skills and competences of the future, and how can we make sure that we keep pace? How do we bridge the rising divide between human beings and artificial intelligence?

Session 2: Bridging the Divide: the Human Brain and Artificial Intelligence

The power of the human brain is enormous, and in order to behave more productively in complex business situations, we need to better understand how the brain works. With new technological advances such as AI, many opportunities related to solving these complex issues emerge, but also many challenges. How is the power of AI transforming society? Is the fusion of technology and human brain capacity creating a new hybrid species?



Session 3: Moving from a Physical to a Digital Society

In partnership with Microsoft.

A digital society is quickly emerging and blending the physical and the virtual worlds. It is affecting not only business models and how we work, but how we live and interact. More than ever, technology is becoming a part of our identity, while our digital and physical worlds are increasingly converging. The Internet of Things, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence are changing the nature of work in ways that could empower and liberate people and reduce inequalities between people and between countries; or the outcome could be diametrically opposite.

Session 4: The Positives and the Dark Side of a Hyper-Connected World

In partnership with Pristop.

The world in which we live is more interconnected than ever. Physical and cyber boundaries have almost vanished, and almost every move we make affects every other individual in society. As interconnectivity simplifies many areas of our lives on the one hand, many challenges and security threats persist on the other.

Tourism as an Instrument for Cultural Co-Operation

In partnership with Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of the Republic of Slovenia and Slovenian Tourist Board.

Strengthening cooperation between the tourism and culture sectors has become a major driving force of destination attractiveness and competitiveness in recent years. Meanwhile, tourism has not only economic effects, but also influences social and cultural relations at the national and international level. Therefore, tourism is an excellent instrument for connecting people, and learning about and accepting the diversity of cultures. Cultural tourism based on tangible and intangible cultural assets is one of the biggest and fastest-growing global tourism markets. Culture and the creative industries, with the support of innovative ICT, are increasingly being used to promote destinations and enhance their competitiveness and attractiveness. The creation and promotion of local distinctiveness is becoming a very important comparative advantage in the competitive, globalised tourism market.

The tourism panel will discuss the wide possibilities of cultural tourism, new technologies in tourism and opportunities for international co-operation in this field, including a presentation of good practices.

SIDE-EVENT

InvestTalk Slovenia 2.0

In partnership with Bank Assets Management Company.

The session will aim to provide crucial answers and speaker insights into the main characteristics of foreign direct investments (FDI) in South-eastern Europe (SEE, FDI-related policies and privatisation as a vehicle of FDI in SEE, trends of economic development in SEE, main risks and challenges for the reform agenda to achieve a more competitive SEE). The representatives of participating institutions will also share their experience and examine best practices for attracting FDI to Slovenia.





7 – 9 September 2018

Ljubljana, Slovenia

www.bledstrategicforum.org

The Young Bled Strategic Forum (Young BSF) is an annual conference bringing together young leaders to engage in lively discussion and develop out-of-the-box solutions to some of the most pressing world issues. The Young BSF model has been growing and changing and has become a unique meeting place for a diverse array of young leaders, entrepreneurs, bloggers, thinkers and socially active individuals, offering them a platform to share their visions, exchange ideas and connect with one another.

The Young BSF 2018 will host young leaders under the title “Sustainable Security: The Role of Youth in Bridging the Divide”. A ‘sustainable security’ approach prioritises the resolution of the interconnected underlying drivers of insecurity and conflict, with an emphasis on preventive rather than reactive strategies. The central premise of the sustainable security approach is that we cannot control all the consequences of insecurity successfully, but have to work to deal with the root causes of instability.

Special emphasis at the Forum will be given to cross-regional cooperation. A new generation of leaders will demonstrate that such cooperation is not only necessary, but inevitable for positive next steps in democratisation, fighting corruption, terrorism and climate change, and fostering social, economic, and cross-cultural sustainable development. To do this, young leaders have to learn from their peers from different regions, sharing their knowledge, ideas and know-how. Sustainable regional cooperation programmes are the key to a comprehensive, inclusive, and innovative approach that engages youth.

The 2018 Young BSF will link the themes and role of youth with the main event, Bled Strategic Forum. Three topics from the main event will be selected and discussed from the youth perspective, while three outstanding young leaders will be selected to participate as speakers at the main event. This will add value to BSF, bringing innovative solutions and shedding light on youth perspectives. Youth will have an opportunity to meet the leaders from the governmental, business and non-governmental sectors and join them in discussions addressing salient issues.

SIDE-EVENTS

Conflict Prevention, Peace Building and Mediation

In partnership with Doshisha University, Japan, and Faculty of Social Sciences, Slovenia.

Many of the divides we observe today were caused by conflict. It not only divides territories, but also the peoples and societies living there. To establish harmonious societies, we need to address the underlying roots of conflict in them; however, the nature of conflict is constantly changing, and we need to tackle these newly emerging problems through new perspectives.

The panel will seek methods of conflict prevention, peace building and mediation by focusing on contemporary cases in the Balkans and the Middle East from the political, cultural and social viewpoints. What role does democracy play in conflict prevention? What is the role of international and regional organisations? How do we address and bridge divides caused by conflict?

Mediterranean Dimension of the OSCE - Youth and Security

In partnership with Embassy of the Republic of Italy in Slovenia.

The event will be held in light of the Italian OSCE Chairmanship and its commitment to work under the motto of “Dialogue, Ownership, Responsibility” in order to build a “genuine partnership” with Mediterranean countries. This partnership can be achieved only through enhanced political dialogue, more concrete collaboration on security issues and the promotion of a holistic approach to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as investment in education and culture, with more attention to women and young people.

The panel will address the role of youth in resolving interconnected security issues in the Euro-Mediterranean region, such as radicalisation, climate change, migration, gender equality, freedom of media and others. Often left out of the official debates and resolutions, the voice of youth is often not heard or included in resolving current issues in the region. Additionally, there is a pressing need to broaden the debate by forging new links between different generations and sectors within the Euro-Mediterranean region.

About the Bled Strategic Forum (BSF)

After more than a decade, the Bled Strategic Forum has evolved into a leading international conference in Central and South-Eastern Europe, bringing together a diverse set of participants, including heads of state and government, ministers, diplomats, businesspeople, scholars and experts, youth, and media from around the world. The Forum focuses on engaging the participants in discussions about, and seeking out-of-the-box solutions for contemporary regional and global challenges. In addition, it provides an excellent opportunity for tailored bilateral and multilateral meetings and networking with prominent regional and global actors from the spheres of diplomacy, policy, business, science, and innovation.

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